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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000376

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2018

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SUBJECT: DPP AND KMT BOOST ENTHUSIASM OF SUPPORTERS WITH
FINAL WEEKEND PRE-ELECTION RALLIES

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On Sunday, March 16, the DPP and KMT each held a series of large-scale rallies throughout Taiwan aimed at boosting enthusiasm and increasing the turnout of their respective supporters in the presidential election next Saturday, March 22. The weather was very good, and although no accurate statistics are available, the KMT claimed 1.5 million people participated in its events, while the DPP gave a figure of 1.2 million for its activities. KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou spent the day and evening in Tainan, while the DPP's Frank Hsieh made appearances in Taitung, Taipei City and County, and Taichung. There were no serious incidents during the day as the police were deployed effectively and kept the two sides apart whenever needed. While the DPP deserves credit for greater creativity and was able to attract a substantial youth contingent to its afternoon rally in Taipei, the KMT and DPP activities basically canceled each other out and so are unlikely to have a large impact on the election. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The overall themes of the DPP rallies were "Support Taiwan and Save Democracy," "A Million People Give High Fives," and "Reverse the Tide and Achieve Victory." DPP candidate Frank Hsieh began the day's activities by greeting the sunrise in Taitung County at the spot where it the sun first appears in Taiwan each morning. In the afternoon, DPP supporters gathered at 260 prearranged locations in western and eastern Taiwan, where at 3:14 p.m. they turned their caps backwards (symbolizing rally caps for their comeback effort) and began to march around Taiwan in a counterclockwise direction. Participants greeted waiting bystanders with high fives as they walked to the next location, five km away from their starting point. In theory the march ended at 4:30 p.m. when the participants bowed in the direction of the central mountain range, paying respect to the land and people of Taiwan, though we observed groups of people still walking about an hour later. The DPP events concluded with a large evening rally in Taichung in central Taiwan, entitled "Treasure Democracy, Protect Taiwan."

¶3. (C) The largest DPP afternoon march began with a perhaps 25-30,000-strong rally at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial in Taipei. Unlike previous political rallies we have attended here,

many young people participated in this event, a large number wearing black and yellow T-shirts bearing the slogan "Reverse the Tide and Achieve Victory" (nizhuan sheng). KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou's surname Ma also means horse, and a group of actors staged a "One China Horse" skit during the pre-march rally. The horse, which symbolized the KMT proposal for a cross-strait common market (one China market), was a giant metal and wood "Trojan horse." At a certain point in the skit, smoke billowed from the belly of the horse, and people dressed to look like PRC laborers, tainted food, and fake goods spilled out of the belly. A giant puppet resembling a top PRC leader led the group's performance, saying at one point, "If we can keep on killing the Taiwanese with poisoned dumplings, it will be easier to liberate the island."

14. (C) After a brief speech at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial, Frank Hsieh boarded his bullet proof campaign vehicle, traveling along with the marchers and greeting the bystanders. Participants and bystanders alike were in high spirits, exchanging high fives throughout the march. Once the marchers reached their destination at a city park, however, some appeared confused as to what to do next since the DPP had not organized any rally or reception area. Hsieh in the meantime went on to his campaign headquarters in Taipei County where he joined Su Tseng-chang in a late-afternoon rally of perhaps 10-12,000 supporters. In the evening, Su and Hsieh delivered impassioned campaign speeches at a rally in Taichung. In addition to the standard issues of Ma's green card, the economic and political implications of the "one China market," and the need to balance an arrogant KMT, Hsieh also raised the violence in Tibet. "If Taiwan's future is to be decided by people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait as once advocated by my election rival, what has happened in Tibet today will be Taiwan's future,"

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Hsieh said. The rally at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial included a giant sign "opposing Chinese hegemony."

15. (C) The KMT staged rallies of its own on Sunday afternoon at key cities in Taiwan, both to diminish the media impact of the DPP activities and of course to energize its own supporters in advance of the March 22 presidential election. The main slogans on the KMT flyer for the major rally in Taipei were: "Sweep Out Corruption and Change the Government," and "Let the Entire People Come and Shout Out: We've Had Enough." In Taipei, KMT supporters, led by 19 mounted horses (symbolizing Ma Ying-jeou's name) began their march from an open staging just across a wide street from the Sun Yat-sen Memorial. The KMT marchers wound their way through the heart of downtown Taipei, before the five km route ended at its Katagalan Boulevard rally site in front of the presidential office. KMT Honorary Chairman Lien Chan and Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung gave rousing speeches to the crowd, which AIT estimates at 15-20,000, on behalf of KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou, who spent the day campaigning in southern Taiwan. This event, like the other rallies and marches by the two camps, was peaceful and orderly, with no signs of serious altercations between KMT and DPP supporters. During the march, perhaps half of passing vehicles positively responded to marchers, flashing the Ma campaign's 'victory sign' hand signal.

Comment

16. (C) While the DPP was stronger in creativity, the KMT significantly reduced the potential media impact of the DPP rallies by holding its own counter-events at the same time. The DPP complained that the KMT copied a number of the key elements of its campaign activities on Sunday, including timing, wearing caps backwards, and wearing black T-shirts with a campaign slogan on the front. On the stage in Tainan, Ma was coughing and appeared tired, and he also missed cues on some slogans and on when to turn his cap backwards. The Sunday activities helped both parties to consolidate their

own bases, but the effects should basically balance out and so will probably not have a great impact on the election.

YOUNG